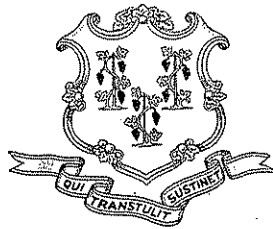


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Good Morning Senator Daily, Representative Staples and Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee.

I would like to express my support for SB 477, AN ACT CONCERNING A TAX CREDIT FOR MAKING JOBS ACCESSIBLE TO EMPLOYEES WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS. As you know, Autism Spectrum Disorder affects many Connecticut residents and I have been working to assist these residents with legislation for the past few years. Many of these residents are able to be productive members of the workforce so long as they are granted certain job training and accommodations. One of the most necessary elements of training for these persons is the availability of a job coach. Often businesses are quite willing to hire persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder but the cost of providing a job coach can be financially devastating. The tax credit provided in SB 477 would allow businesses to hire these residents without facing untenable added expenses. Certain federal tax credits which offer incentives to businesses

to hire disabled persons may not include credits for the use of a job coach for persons with autism spectrum disorders

In our state, Walgreens opened a 700,000 square foot distribution center in Windsor, Conn., where 30 percent of the workforce is made up of people with disabilities. According to the federal department of labor, unemployment among disabled job seekers is nearly double that of the typically-able population. Employment of persons with disabilities is beneficial both for the disabled person and for society at large.

At the Walgreens location, employees with disabilities have been trained (in part with the use of job coaches) to work side-by-side with other team members – with the same productivity goals, earning the same pay. Disabilities range from autism and retardation to hearing and physical impairments. An on-site training facility helps those with special needs become prepared for employment so everyone can work productively and effectively. The facility is one of the most productive and efficient in the entire Walgreens company. I hope that the tax credit in SB 477 would encourage more employers to take a similarly enlightened view. Thank you for raising this important legislation.